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SOME REMARKS

UPON

Mr. Collier's Defence of his Short View of the English *Stage*, &c.

IN

VINDICATION

OF

Mr. *Congreve*, &c.

In a Letter to a FRIEND.

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SOME REMARKS UPON *Mr.* Collier's *Defence*, &c.

SIR,

I Receiv'd Yours, and with it Mr. *Collier's Defence of his ſhort View.* I thank you for both, but cannot continue to do ſo, when you expreſs a deſire I ſhou'd give you my Opinion of that Book: You know I am naturally Lazy; and though I ſometimes make Remarks to pleaſe my ſelf, yet I hate taking the pains to put them in a Method fit for your Peruſal; therefore if you muſt be obey'd, you ſhall havet hem juſt as they are, Rough, Indigeſted, and about as Mannerly as the Defence which lies before me.

First, For the Arrogancy of the Epiſtle to the Reader, where he calls all the Anſwerers of his dead-doing *Short View*, except Mr. *Congreve* and the Author of the *Relapſe*, Volunteers, which he proudly ſeems to imply are not worth his leaſt notice; they have yet enough upon their hands, they will find themſelves ſufficiently affected with the Fortune of their Friends; he looks upon them at preſent ſtunn'd by his mighty Arguments, but if ever they have the Courage to revive, he ſhall ſpeak with them hereafter: This is Magiſterial, and like Mr. *Collier*; yet ſincerely, for I have reſolv'd to give you my thoughts freely, conſidering the Leiſure the *Viewer* and *Reviewer* of Plays has, he might have found a Bone to pick even out of poor *Elkanah*'s; but he loves to read Plays better; and ſo much for that.

Next he has the ſatisfaction to ſee the Intereſt of Virtue not altogether ſunk; he is vain enough to believe he has ſhook the Stage, and hopes a total Overthrow will not be unacceptable: But I am inform'd, for all his mighty boaſting, and the

the wondrous Progreſs he has made, the *Mourning Bride*, againſt which he rais'd his chief Battery, brought the greateſt Audience they have this Winter had: But all the World will not believe Mr. *Collier*'s Judgment infallible, no more than they will his Holineſs's. He goes on with a Catalogue of Smutty Plays, not exempting *Limberham*, which though forbid the Stage, finds a place in his Cloſet; and if the general Accuſation ſeems hard, he is ready to fall to Particulars; I believe him, and dare ſwear there's not a Line in any of the Comedies he has nam'd, that is bordering upon Smut, as the Modeſt Gentleman calls it, but has its Marginal Note, and can be produc'd with a wet finger.

Laſtly, he concludes almoſt in the very Words of one of Mr. *Dryden*'s Rants;

Take notice, Poets, you the Aggreſſors are.

Then he comes upon them with two dreadful We's, as if the whole Body of the Clergy were alarmed, and not only Players but all their Abettors were to be immediately excommunicated; when he might

might as well have said, *Almighty I am blameable that I began no sooner:* For upon Enquiry I do not find one Divine has thought it worth his while to neglect his graver Studies for the matter: Which I apprehend is a great Satisfaction to present Writers; for though they venture to dispute with Mr. *Collier*, yet wou'd only in silence grieve, shou'd they be censured by that Church, which (Prophane as Mr. *Collier* esteems them) I am apt to think they wou'd expose their Lives to preserve.

One of the Answerers made an Observation worth remembring, *viz.* That the Stage fell, in our late Confusions, with the Monarchy and Church; a certain sign it was a Foe to neither; nay Mr. *Collier* amongst his black Calumnies doth not charge it with promoting Rebellion; that Pious Work is left to the busy Heads of Bigots and Enthusiasticks.

Thus far the Preface: But, my dear Friend, e're you proceed, I must beg you to recollect what I said at first; not look upon this as a Regular Answer, or Defence of those Gentlemen, who can do

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it ſo much better for themſelves; only the reſult of my preſent Thoughts, tranſmitted inſtantly to Paper, after my running over Mr. *Collier*'s Book, and ſent to you without further Examination. Surely I ſhall have no occaſion to tell you how much I revere the Clergy; you know my near Alliance, the particular Veneration I both owe and pay them; yet I hope, without any Offence to thoſe good men which bleſs and adorn the Kingdom, I may charge Mr. *Collier* with Vanity, Uncharitableneſs, and Ill nature.

If the Caſe is really ſo deſperate as he wou'd make it appear, methinks it ſhou'd be exploded more ſolemnly. When I ſee the Numerous Quotations he brings from Ancient and Modern Authors of Plays, I cannot help fancying he has ſpent too much time in the Studies he ſo bitterly condemns. If repreſenting Vicious Characters upon the Stage has occaſion'd the Practice of them in the Town, ſo his extracting the Faults only of all the late Plays he has meddled with, and haling them (as himſelf expreſſes on another occaſion) into his Book, has only ſerved to revive what

elſe had paſſed perhaps utterly unheeded, or at leaſt not dwelt upon the Memory. I muſt confeſs my ſelf ſcandalized, when I hear Mr. *Collier* in one Line treating of the moſt Sacred Things our Religion contains, and in the next rallying or reflecting, as looſely as e're a Comick Poet of them all: This comes pretty near what he accuſes Lady *Plyant* with: And, by the way, that Sacred Name is too often uſed in Converſation upon the moſt frivolous occaſions; ſo that to put it indecently in the mouth of an ill Woman, ſhould rather deter than encourage the Audience to follow the Example.

Mr. *Collier*'s Reproofs to me ſeem inveterate; he writes with Animoſity, as if he had an Averſion to the Man as well as his Faults, and appears only pleas'd when he has found a Miſcarriage. Who, but Mr. *Collier*, wou'd have ranſack'd the *Mourning Bride*, to charge it with Smut and Prophaneneſs, when he might have ſate down with ſo many Scenes wherein even his malicious Chymiſtry cou'd have

have extracted neither? But againſt this Play, as if the Spirit of Contradiction were his delight, he muſters all his Forces; and having paſſed Sentence as the Divine, commences Critick, and brings the Poetry to his ſevere Scrutiny, tranſcribes half Speeches, puts the beginning and end together, as in *Page* 92.

Drenched in briny Waves, pale and expiring,
Yet God-like even then.

His own charming Simile comes next, of a Seraphim and a drown'd Rat: So on the other Leaf he is got to the Image of Cats running up a Wall: Truly (*Frank*) I cannot but impute theſe abject Thoughts to his own reptile Mind; for I have read the *Mourning Bride* often, and it always inſpired me with the nobleſt Ideas: Then he cavils at *Almeria*'s Anſwer, That ſhe mourns for a Deliverance from the Wreck: This too is a Line taken out of a very probable and modeſt Reply. And here I conceive Mr. *Collier*, as indeed he has ſometimes done before, ſeems to change his own Opinion;

for I ſhou'd have thought he wou'd have liked *Almeria* better for commemorating her Deliverance in Mourning and Humiliation, than if ſhe had enjoined Mirth and Revelling, nay, perhaps Plays. Well, ſince Mr. *Collier* by his good-will ſhows nothing but what he thinks bad in the Play, pray give me leave to tranſcribe one Speech amongſt many, which ſure will ſtand Mr. *Collier*'s Teſt.

I've been too blame, and queſtion'd within piety
The Care of Heaven; not ſo my Father bore
More anxious Grief; this ſhou'd have better taught me
This Leſſon, in ſome hour of Inſpiration
By him ſet down, when his pure Thoughts were born
Like Fumes of Sacred Incenſe o're the Clouds,
And wafted thence on Angels Wings through Ways
Of Light to the bright Source of all. There in
The Book of Preſcience he beheld this Day,
And waking to the World and mortal Senſe,
Left this Example of his Reſignation;

This

This his laſt Legacy to me, which I
Will treaſure here, more worth than Diadems,
Or all extended Rule of Regal Power.

Now I can pick Inſtruction and Delight out of this, and reſt ſatisfied, if in a Tragedy the Paſſions riſe either Love, Anger or Madneſs; I can behold them without one Thought of Imitation. It appears Mr. *Collier* has a very mean Opinion of the Capacity of the Audience, when he conceives all the Poets Flights will ſo far affect them as to practice the ſame; like *Don Quixote*, who cou'd not read Romances, but he muſt turn Knight-Errant. So ſeveral Characters in Comedy, which Mr. *Collier* has fell foul upon, I dare venture to affirm, the Poet never deſign'd for Examples; the fulſome *Belinda* in the *Old Batchellor* (as the cleanly-mouth'd Mr. *Collier* is pleas'd to call her) is ſhown full of Affectation; but I find it no where in the Play commended; and I always thought the Vanity was deſign'd to be expoſed, not promoted; and if at laſt ſhe's married to a Libertine ſhe likes, where's the mighty Happineſs? Doth not Fortune daily

daily produce the ſame in the World? Are not Fools, and Knaves, and Villains, often rich, and great, and in appearance happy? Yet this real Example doth not, I hope, tempt the good Man to forſake his Vertue for Preferment. What think ye now, dear *Frank*, of the Viewer? Do ye imagine he had any deſign to ingratiate himſelf with the ſeverer Clergy when he choſe this Subject, or to Cajole the Diſſenting Miniſters, when he took up their Quarrel, or make his Court yet higher? Since Plays are not in vogue, as they were the two laſt Reigns; truly I ſhrowdly ſuſpect he has a mind to tack about; he can change his Opinion, and be more complaiſant if he pleaſes; witneſs his ſoft Uſage of Mr. *Dryden*; in the Defence he ranks him amongſt the beſt Criticks; allows him a good Judge in Language, and mentions him, quite contrary to his Cuſtom, with much decency and reſpect; nay, I believe, ſhou'd the Old Gentleman become Poet Laureat again, Mr. *Collier* wou'd afford him a Panegyrick, notwithſtanding he tells the Author of the *Relapſe* he is not very full of them.

No,

No, there I think he is in the right, railing is properly his talent, and that he does with a guſt the Chriſtian Religion never inſpired; no plea of Youth, no acknowledgment appeaſes him; thus he makes himſelf a tinkling Cymbol, who whilſt he gingles with his Wit, and joins the Fathers and the Poets in his Citations, forgets the nobleſt gift of Heaven, *Charity*; proudly Judges and Condemns, finds Guilty or Abſolves by his own Authority.

Page 74. Kings he allows to be Diſciplin'd upon the Stage, but not the Church; ſurely 'tis a ſhame either ſhould be abuſed; but if a Tyrant, a Raviſher, a Blaſphemer, be extirpirated, and no good Prince is alarm'd at the matter, Why may not a good Prieſt ſee an ill one Characteriſed, and not be concern'd, ſince even Mr. *Collier* and ten thouſand Inſtances allow, that failings are incident to them as well as to the reſt of human kind? Do but look over ſeveral *Spaniſh* and *Italian* Novels you have, and there you will find many abominable Stories of the Monks and Friars;

Friars; no Nations can be in greater ſubjection to their Ghoſtly Fathers than they, yet even with them the Bad are expoſed; all our Reformations and Amendments came from diſcovery of their Faults; nor can I think a Chaplain Ridiculed in ſuch a Family as Sir *Tunbelly's*, Reflects any more upon a ſenſible and learned Man in that Capacity, than Juſtice *Clodpate* in *Epſom-Wells*, does upon ſeveral Worthy Men that fill the Benches: That there are ſottiſh and unfitting Men amongſt the Clergy, muſt be granted, then why ſhou'd we not imagine ſuch a one in ſuch a Family; for ſure 'twou'd be the higheſt piece of rudeneſs to believe a Mr. *Collier* wou'd accept on't.

You ſee, Sir, I am as good as my word, jump from one thing to another, juſt as the hints I obſerved in reading occur, without minding which was firſt or laſt; and now I remember what the Biſhop of *Meaux* ſays, he calls *Iſrael* an innocent and undebauched People; when ſurely no Hiſtory extant ſets forth greater Villanies than the Sacred Story does of the *Iſraelites*, their Abo-

Abominations were ſuch, that they were carried away Captive, and their Temple deſtroyed at laſt, for the completion of their Wickedneſs, notwithſtanding the ſtrongeſt Convictions, and their Prophets plain Prophecies, they Crucified the Lord of Life, and were afterwards driven from their beloved *Canaan*, with all the Cruelties Almighty Vengeance ever ſhow'd: Yet theſe People had no Theatres.

Page 89. Mr. *Collier* ſays 'tis much ſafer being of different Opinions, than agreeing in believing nothing. I grant him 'tis much better; a miſtaken Conſcience far above none at all; but for the ſafety he muſt excuſe me, ever ſince tender Conſciences produced Wars, and Murthers in cold Blood; ſince the beſt of Men and Kings, fell under the ſpecious Name of Conſcience: I ſhou'd not care for being Govern'd even by Mr. *Collier*'s Conſcience, he has too much fury in it for me; I never ſaw the Man, but his Writing makes my fancy repreſent him like one who had been heaving at a ſtately Fabrick, and miſſing there his aim, falls upon the

next Cottage; like *Dionisius*, failing in State, sets upon the Stage, Born to be busy, and disturb whate're seems setled.

In another place he complains, *Manuel* is punished with Death for Tyranny, not Blasphemy; this certainly is trifling to the last degree; for if a Poet shows an Ill Man, and brings him to destruction, any reasonable Creature may put all his Faults together, and endeavour from the Moral to avoid them.

The 94th and 95th *Page* he imploys in ransacking the Poetry of the *Mourning Bride*; and since he can screw nothing there to Smutt and Profaneness, turns witty upon the Argument, and Burlesques about two Sides of Paper; yet for all what he has done, or threatens that he cou'd be larger, and this suffices only at present, as Mr. *Congreve* says, if the *Mourning Bride* is immodest, he is uncapable of Writing any thing modest: So I say, if that Tragedy is not allowable for its Decency, Morals and Poetry, I despair of ever seeing any thing of the Dramatick kind unexceptionable.

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Page 57. *Jeremy*'s Wickedneſs is again produced, and the Nice Mr. *Collier* is ſtrangely provoked, that the Varlet *Jeremy* ſhou'd talk of *Whoreſon appetites*. How this is Blaſpheming the Creation, to me appears flamingly ſurprizing; for I thought every Man, ſince the Fall of *Adam*, born with ſenſual and ſinful Appetites; therefore unleſs the word *Whoreſon* is Blaſphemy, I muſt acknowledge I cannot find it out.

The 47th *Page* he is buſy in Ridiculing Mr. *Congreve*'s Story of his Widow's Letter; and in the 55th gives a Sample of his Talent that way; for that *Vehiculum* underſtood Phyſick ſhou'd be taken in a Wheel-barrow, was never equall'd by all the Legends of the Wiſe-men of *Gotham*.

In troth *Frank* I am almoſt tired, tho' the fruitful Mr. *Collier* in every Page diſcovers Rancor, and a plain Deſire not to amend, but deſtroy.

This I obſerve in all Mr. *Collier*'s Remarks, there's an Air of Spite; for when he has pickt out any thing for his Cavil-

ling purpoſe, if there's a following Line that will in the leaſt extenuate, that's ſurely left out; nay, he will not allow of *Worthy's ſudden Repentance*, but is ſo diſappointed at it, that he gives poetick Rules for his continuing a Libertine to the end of the Play. I believe his chief Reaſon is, that he might have had further occaſion for Correction. Then he is again diſpleas'd in the *Provok'd Wife*, that Sir *John Brute* is not puniſh'd enough. Truly, I think, his whole Character is one continued Puniſhment; and I wou'd no more chuſe Sir *John's* Circumſtances for the pleaſure of his Libertiniſm, than I wou'd Mr. *Collier's* for the pleaſure of Laſhing on't.

One thing more, and I have done. In the 89th *Page*, he reflects upon poor Mr. *Lee's* Diſtraction; which ſhows the Temper of our Reformer, as much as if he had writ whole Volumes. Mr. *Lee* was the Son of an Eminent Divine; methinks that Conſideration alone, ſince Mr. *Collier* ſets up for the Champion of the Clergy, ſhou'd have deterr'd him from the Reflection: Beſides, let him but look over the Records of *Bedlam*, and, as he

ſaid,

ſaid, the good Women in *Homer* might Pole with the bad; ſo I dare ſay, the Miniſters under thoſe unfortunate Sufferings will far out-pole the Poets. Yet God forbid this ſhou'd be produc'd as an Argument either againſt our Religion or Paſtors, tho' Mr. *Collier* is, as he ſees, provok'd to uſe it for a Warning to poor Scriblers.

All my Acquaintance that diſcourſe this Matter, are convinced Mr. *Collier* has a particular Pique againſt Mr. *Congreve*; nay, ſome will go farther, and gueſs the Cauſe; perhaps there may be Lines of that Author's that vex the *Non-Juror* more than all the ſmutty Jeſts he has pickt up; Lines that Mourn the Royal *Paſtora*; Heroick Lines, that ſound the Glory of our Monarch. From this ſweet Poetry they judge his Gall is raiſed; which being gorged and full, overflows, nor ſpares the dead or living, Friends and Foes, the bitter Deluge reaches and beſpatters all.

Now I ſuppoſe, if Mr. *Collier* ſee this, he'd ask me if I thought his Gall contain'd as much as the Bay of *Biſcay*? Truly I believe his comes as near it as any

any Man's in the Three Kingdoms; however, I know you, dear Sir, have ſcarce enough to be angry with Mr. *Collier*: Therefore I ſhall ſay no more, but deſire you to excuſe the Faults and Length of this Epiſtle, which was occaſion'd by your own Commands. I am

Yours, &c.

FINIS.

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